Oxford

STOCK No 752

MADE IN U. S. A.

"Letting Go Again"

a one-act
by
MELCHIOR MULCH.

Cast:

Dan, a young man.
Jim, his friend, who is giving a party.
Maureen, a girl Dan's age.

(Vignette: DAN handing his coat to JIM.)

DAN. Nothing I need more than a party.

JIM. Man, how does it feel to be letting go again?

DAN. Can't say just as yet.

JIM. We'll see what we can do to help things along.

(Scene: vague "party," with people milling around, etc. Room, smoke, passing of trays and the like. They figure in no way whatever in the play, and are strictly background. As soon as possible they are all obscured by haze, or whatever can be managed, so the principals can move more freely.)

JIM. This is Maureen, this is Dan.

MAUREEN. Nice to meet you.

DAN. Nicer than you think.

JIM. Sit down, you both. I'll bring what you need.

(Drinks and sandwiches appear ad libitum throughout.)

MAUREEN. "Don't you just hate parties like this."

DAN. That is the world's prototypical banality.

MAUREEN. Or at any rate, archetypical.

DAN. Hey, where you learn them big words?

MAUREEN. I went to college and I majored in literature, but I won't say what college because that would be utterly provincial and besides there should be other things to talk about.

DAN. Literature, indeed.

MAUREEN. Oh, my, yes.

DAN. Literature is a wonderful thing. If is our heritage, you know. That's what it is. Our heritage. I never read any of it.

MAUREEN. Oh?

DAN. Just books.
Tell me things. What you cared about and what happened and then tell me about the other things. Tell me that. I think we should talk.

MAUREEN. About what?

DAN. Actually not about ~~things~~ anything. I might want to talk around some things.

MAUREEN. Like what?

DAN. Like how things are in general.

MAUREEN. Tell me, then.

DAN. Can't think as there's much to tell.

MAUREEN. Tell me anything.

DAN. I don't know anything.

MAUREEN. Neither do I.

DAN. You, a college girl?

MAUREEN. I know about you.

DAN. Is that right.

MAUREEN. I know about your divorce.

DAN. It seems only yesterday I was a happy married actor, working when possible. Then something happened, it is not clear to me what, and so here I am, an actor paying alimony and working when possible.

MAUREEN. Do you want to talk about it?

DAN. Now that I taste it on my tongue, I don't think I will. You weren't married, were you? Of course not.

MAUREEN. Almost, a couple of times.

DAN. What stopped you?

MAUREEN. Never quite right.

DAN. Quite right, quite right. It's a good thing, marriage. For some purposes. And there I was, and I thought, this is all right, and abruptly Mrs. Baker was seeing all the wrong people and serving me with legal papers.
It's a funny thing about having been through this-and-that. You get the dragged-in feeling, theat you'll never

get so much with it again, and that the next thing with a woman will be twice asx dull--

MAUREEN. Do you think in terms of "things"?

DAN. In a way, sometimes. They say a girl I have an affair with won't be the same afterwards. That's so. But neither will I. Which is, when you think about it-- fair.

MAUREEN. May one think that you helped bust your own marriage?

DAN. Think anything you like. You see... look. When you launch a beautiful thing-- like getting married. Indeed. When you start a thing with somebody, all kinds of things can go wrong, and if you're in a hurry and drive close to the cliff-edge and don't have all the time in the world for delicacy and care and consideration; and if you are still a great flaming pile of needs that you can't make the other person understand; one thing goes wrong, and then the other, and neither of you quite has a chance, any more, to even try supplying what the other's gotta have. And then it's looking again.

MAUREEN. Do you need so much more than other people?

DAN. Mmm-- generally more. The two things I am good at. One is acting. Do you know what I hate?

MAUREEN. No.

DANxxxTakingxoutxpxoblemsxxxIxhate dxscussingxmilxkxxy

DAN. Talking out pooblems. I hate discussing personal relations that have gone sour-- there's no use fixing at them, no use talking.

MAUREEN. I know what you mean.

DAN. Which is why I'm talking to you.

MAUREEN. Oh?

DAN. I thought I'd try something new. Discussing a relationship in advance.

MAUREEN. What relationship?

DAN. My relationship with you.

MAUREEN. And what is that going to be?

DAN. I couldn't say, at this moment. You know what's most important?

MAUREEN. No.

DAN. It's the holding someone in your arms. That's the really

good thing; that's all, just holding, sort of.

MAUREEN. I've always thought that, somehow.

DAN. It was me that wrecked the marriage.

MAUREEN. What?

DAN. One thing and the other. Why am I telling you this? I don't know.

MAUREEN (ill-at-ease.) I'm glad you are.

DAN. It was the damndest thing. I made a lot of mistakes.

MAUREEN. We many of us make mistakes.

DAN. Oh, you believe in me-- I can't bear it. Mistakes, sure, but not so they bear constant repetition. I see somebody-- a girl, any girl-- and there is something about her so strange, so wonderful, that I want to know her, have her, konwm all about her.

MAUREEN. Do you fall in love?

DAN. Too much. And when you do know all about that girl, it's disappointing.

MAUREEN. Always?

DAN. No. And so you keep messing up the same old way, and nothing lasts, and everybody's hurt.
I don't suppose you could quite get what I mean, but there's a crazy situatbn you find yourself in, you don't know how to get out of it, where somehow everything you do is calculated, by demons or an IBM machine or whatever is running the world these days, these things you do, everything you do is calculated to make you fall down, somehow--

MAUREEN. You keep tripping yourself up--

DAN. I know--

MAUREEN. -- You know you're doing something very stupid and you've got to stop--

DAN. --Yes--

MAUREEN. And it's so easy to stop you never bother.

DAN. And you keep lousing yourself ftk up the same old way--

MAUREEN. But there's a crazy thing you've got to remember, and that's that nobody else--

DAN. -- that's right-- nobody nobody
no bloody body else--

MAUREEN. You can't get help from anybody else, because--

DAN. It's just something else to fight.

MAUREEN. Yeah.

DAN. Yeah.

MAUREEN. Yeah.

DAN. How old are you?

MAUREEN. Twenty-seven.

DAN. That's pretty close.

MAUREEN. That's good.

DAN. Yeah.

MAUREEN. Where do you live?

DAN. Pretty close.

MAUREEN. That's good.

DAN. I was going to ask you a question, but I've forgotten what it was.

MAUREEN. Gee, and I had an answer all ready, but I can't remember it.

DAN. I once went with a girl who wore a sailor hat.

MAUREEN. Oh? And what did she do?

DAN. The usual.

MAUREEN. I wish they wouldn't salt peanuts, don't you?

(DAN reaches for some peanuts from her hand.)

DAN. May I have the pleasure?

MAUREEN. You may have all the pleasure you want.

(DAN drains his glass.)

DAN. The funny thing is, I don't get drunk. I just get more and more attractive to women.

MAUREEN. Don't appreciate me in that tone of voice! I don't mean just to sit here and be corrupted.

DAN. Nonsense! I'm not corrupting you. It is my experience

that no one is ever corrupted unless he wants to be. ... It is my experience that everyone wants to be corrupted.

MAUREEN. How long have you been in New York?

DAN. All my life.

MAUREEN. And how do you <u>like</u> our city?

DAN. Can't say I've seen enough of it yet to judge. Who's your hairdresser?

MAUREEN. Oh, my God--

DAN. Is that so? Well, he certainly does wonderful things--

MAUREEN. Don't you just hate--

DAN. Parties like this! You know--

MAUREEN. Parties like this-- I think that--

DAN. You know, old Paterson has his nerve throwing us together like this.

MAUREEN. He certainly has. I think that he has marvelous taste. You know, it's amazing-- how little there is to say when you've got to say a lot, and fast.

(DAN reacts slowly. "This is too fine a girl to risk hurting," shall be the upshot of his thought-processes.)

DAN. Listen, what are you doing in my life!

MAUREEN. (! reaction on her face.) I don't know--

DAN. YOu're crazy. You <u>don't</u> know--

MAUREEN. I like it here--

DAN. You don't know me, the things I do, the mistakes I keep am making--

MAUREEN. I made a mistake once-- today-- I made another-- yesterday -- the day before, too-- and before that--

DAN. I've got no business talking with you, drinking with you, sitting this close-- you know what happens next--

MAUREEN. Yes--

DAN. No--

MAUREEN. Why not-- Dammit--

DAN. Don't you come from someplace? And don't you have an

engagement tomorrow?

MAUREEN. I don't know, and you?

DAN. I know what I'm doing tonight-- Shake my hand, quick.

MAUREEN. More, please-- I want to do more than that! (He rises, having shaken her hand.) -- More than that. (She stands.) You're right. Sit down.

DAN. I can't. You don't understand.

MAUREEN. I do. Just for a minute.

(He sits.)

MAUREEN. Life keeps droning on, like a monotonous eggbeater--

DAN. You're so right.

MAUREEN. And we meet, two raisins in the batter--

DAN. Both going different ways--

MAUREEN. Maybe, but we can't tell so soon--

DAN. I'm scared. Any time but now. I'm sorry I met you now. Two months ago. Six months from now. It would be different if it were just a little something, a twist on the linen. But you're too real.

MAUREEN. Don't I know. So let me just say this. I hope we end up in the same Danish. I don't know why I made you sit down again. I just couldn't let you go that fast.

DAN. I've got to.
MAUREEN. Goodbye--
DAN. MMMMMMMM Let's pretend it all happened.

MAUREEN. Yes. Goodbye.

(Vignette: DAN and JIM at the doorway.)

DAN. Jim! I got to get up early. Big things brewing. Thanks a lot.

JIM. Well, boy, how do you feel? How'd you like the party?

DAN. It was nice, letting go again.

JIM. See you, boy.

BLACKOUT

'LETTING GO ★GAIN' One-half, 1969 Written in multiples by night?